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# The Honorable Mrs. Ling's Conversion

BY  
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## PERSONS OF THE PLAY

**THE HONORABLE MRS. LING**

GOLDEN LILY, Mrs. Ling's daughter-in-law

A SOOTHSAYER

MISS FRANCES WOODBY, a missionary

DR. LUCY WOODBY, a medical missionary

HEAVENLY WISDOM, a house-boy in the missionary home

A COOLIE

PLUM BLOSSOM, a twelve-year-old schoolgirl

BIG SISTER, a native teacher in the mission school

**THE HONORABLE MR. LING**

SISTER NUMBER THREE, a native medical student

PRECIOUS GOLD, a girl of eight

BEAUTIFUL PEARL, a girl of seven

OLD RAG, a boy of four or five

## COSTUMES

**MRS. LING**—Wears the dress of a wealthy Chinese lady. In the first scene, when the curtain rises, she has on a handsomely embroidered silk skirt. Her kimono is bright colored but not elaborate. The one which Golden Lily brings to her from the trunk is more elegant and this she puts over the one she has already on. Her hair, which is parted in the middle, is brought very smoothly over the ears and is coiled low on the neck. She wears a flower in the side of the coil in addition to the head-dress, which she is adjusting when the curtain rises. To give the appearance of the tiny feet of a Chinese woman, her toes are bound into a pair of small Chinese shoes. The binding, which is a strip of cotton two or three inches wide, winds around the foot to the ankle and is so adjusted as to keep the shoe in place. Her make-up should be very white with very bright rouge on the cheeks and lips, and eyebrows very black and sloping.

**GOLDEN LILY**—Wears plain dark blue cotton kimono and trousers. The trousers are loose and reach half-way between the knees and the ankles. She also wears a small square apron of the same material which hangs without gathers from a cord around the waist, straw sandals, and no stockings. Her hair, drawn very straight back from her face, is worn high in a Psyche knot from the top and sides of which are stuck long silver ornaments. Three narrow flat strips of shining metal seven or eight inches long, half an inch wide, and pointed somewhat at the ends will answer as substitutes for these hair ornaments. Large loops of heavy steel wire will do for the silver earrings which she wears. Her make-up should be a yellow-brown with no red in it. In the third and fifth scene she wears a light blue cotton kimono and flowers in her hair.

**SOOTHSAYER**—Wears a long loose coat nearly to the ankles. It has ample sleeves which cover his hands. His trousers are tied closely about the ankle. He wears a red flannel hood which extends down the back to the waist forming a long

narrow cape. The edge of the hood is bordered with a strip of velvet or other black material two inches wide. He also wears large spectacles. His make-up should be yellow-brown.

**CHILDREN**—Wear bright colored trousers and kimonos. The girls wear either a narrow band decorated with flowers, or a hood which may be made from large bandana handkerchief, one corner of which is folded back from the face, the opposite corner hanging down the back to form a cape. Old Rag wears a small black skull cap with a red knob on top.

**HEAVENLY WISDOM**—Wears a loose white cotton coat extending a little below the hips, and loose light blue cotton trousers which are tied neatly at the ankle. He wears a black skull cap with a red knob on top and may or may not wear a queue lengthened so as to reach his knees by braiding into the hair several strands of black cord. His make-up should be dark brown.

**COOLIE**—Wears plain dark blue or black cotton coat and trousers. The coat is loose and extends a little below the hips. The trousers come half-way between the knees and the ankles and hang loose and straight. His hat is made of bamboo and grass and is broad brimmed, extending almost to the edge of his shoulders. The small crown comes sharply to a peak. The hat may be constructed from cardboard and covered with raffia. He wears grass sandals on his bare feet. He may or may not wear a queue. Make-up should be dark brown.

**BIG SISTER and SISTER NUMBER THREE**—Wear plain light blue cotton kimonos and trousers. Their hair is worn parted and combed very smoothly over the ears and coiled low on the neck. They also wear a flower in the coil. The make-up should be rather light.

**MR. LING**—Wears the elegant costume of a Chinese official consisting of a long silk coat and sleeveless overcoat, and trousers and leggings of contrasting colors. The leggings are tied neatly at the ankles. His hat is a round turban with upturned brim. It has a tassel of red silk that spreads itself all over the crown and the hat is worn tied under his chin. He wears a long string of large glass beads around his neck. He, also, wears large spectacles. His make-up should be yellow-brown.

DR. WOODBY is dressed in plain white.

MISS WOODBY is dressed in simple street costume.

If Chinese shoes cannot be obtained, wear plain black slippers. Chinese characters should all wear white stockings except with sandals, when no stockings are worn.

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR PROPERTIES

It adds greatly to the interest of the play to have the properties genuine articles from China. Idols, ancestral tablets, scrolls, and curios may often be obtained from missionary boards at a small rental charge. But where this is not possible, the following suggestions for making substitutes will be found helpful:

**LACQUER DRESSING-CASE**—may be constructed from a cardboard box 10 inches long, 8 inches wide, and 6 inches high. The lid of the case, which opens at one end, has a mirror or an imitation mirror a little smaller than itself attached to the inside by means of a hinge, so that when the case is in use, the lid is elevated, and the mirror stands at an angle convenient for hair-dressing. The case should also have two small drawers opening from the same end, where toilet accessories are kept. Stained in a dark mahogany color and decorated with a colored floral design, the box may be made to serve the purpose of the genuine dressing-case.

**CHARMS**—The Soothsayer's charms are two oval pieces of wood 3 inches in length, rounded on one side and flat on the other and tied together with a string four or five inches long. Fortunes are good or bad according to the manner in

which these fall when they are tossed up. Two flat sides or two rounded sides or a flat side and a round side all have their significance.

The charm which Old Rag wears may be a large coin or a large copper disk or a square of wood suspended by a string from his neck.

HONORABLE LING'S OFFICIAL CARD—is made of a sheet of red paper 5 x 9 inches and inscribed with a few Chinese characters in black ink. It is in a red envelope of the same size which also bears an inscription in Chinese characters.

IDOL PAPERS—used by Golden Lily, are strips of colored paper red, yellow, lavender, 6 or 7 inches long and 3 or 4 inches wide.

THE TRUNK—used in the first scene is a small leather one, or it may be a small wooden box painted red.

CHINESE CUPS—are without handles. They may often be obtained from Chinese restaurants.

SCROLLS FOR WALL DECORATIONS—Any one with artistic taste can design these. They may be made of red paper decorated with Chinese inscriptions in black, or of white paper with colored floral or landscape designs.

ALTAR DECORATIONS—should give the appearance of rich gold effects combined with red and black. This may be accomplished with gilt, red, and black paper cut in conventional design.

CHINESE WATER PIPE—used in the first scene, may be represented by a silver cardboard oval 3 inches high, 3 inches long and 1 inch wide. From this extends a small metal pipe 8 inches in length with a bend at the upper end 2½ inches long. The pipe is decorated with cords and tassels of red.

CASH—may be made of copper disks an inch in diameter having a hole in the center through which they are strung on a string. A yard of cash strung thus is none too long for good effect.

CLOTHES—in Scene IV should be hung very straight and smooth on long poles with the poles stuck through both arms of the kimono and through one leg of the trousers.

#### MUSIC

Chinese native melodies add greatly to the effect of the play. *Native Chinese Melodies*, published by the Missionary Education Department of the Interchurch World Movement, New York City, contains several such airs. They may be played before the play and between the scenes. The hymn which the school girls sing in the opening of Scene II may be one of these melodies. All music should be of a minor strain. *Meditation from Thais* makes an effective solo after Scene IV.

In Scenes II and III two entrances should be arranged.

## THE HONORABLE MRS. LING'S CONVERSION

### Scene I

A room in Mrs. Ling's house. In the back and center of the stage is an altar decorated elaborately in gold and black, on which are ancestral tablets and Chinese idols. Placed at back and center of altar and somewhat elevated is the Goddess of Mercy, the divine Kuang Yen. A brass incense burner filled with smoking incense sticks is before the goddess. On either side of the brass burner is a tall red candle in a brass candlestick. The wall back of the altar is decorated with a large red banner elaborately designed in embroidery and Chinese characters. On each side of the red banner are scrolls depicting scenes from Chinese life. The other walls of the stage are also hung with scrolls. A small wooden box or leather trunk stands on a bench at the right of the stage. A small table is placed on the left of the stage and a chair stands at the right of the altar. Potted plants and palms are placed about the room.

*As the curtain rises Mrs. Ling is seen in the center front of the stage seated before a small table which holds a Chinese lacquer dressing-case, adjusting a head-dress.*

MRS. LING: (*Looking into the mirror*) There, that is better. A little more rouge on my lips and more black on my eyebrows and I shall do very well. Better than my sister-in-law anyway. She's a fright, her feet are so big—not small and dainty like mine. The book of etiquette says that a woman's feet should be bound short, so that she can walk with mincing steps and sway like a willow tree (*sways backward and forward as she speaks*), and that suits me exactly. There's nothing so vulgar as big feet! My golden lilies have been the envy of all my neighbors. But where is my hair-oil? Where is my daughter-in-law? Sweep House, come here quickly! Stupid, where is my hair-oil? (*Enter Golden Lily, who searches in the drawer of the dressing-case.*) I look like one of those white-faced barbarian women with my hair all frowzled up like this. Come, Stupid, help me comb my hair. And find my hair ornaments and earrings.

GOLDEN LILY: (*Meekly*) Yes, honorable Mother-in-law, I'll find them for you. Here they are in this drawer. (*Puts flowers in Mrs. Ling's hair and helps her to adjust her head-dress.*)

MRS. LING: The sage says, "In powdering the face, remember that the heart should be kept pure and white; in arranging the head-dress, consider that the heart needs to be carefully regulated; in oiling the hair, resolve to make the heart pliable and docile." That's very good advice for you, Stupid; you need to be made docile. A young wife should be an echo in the house. Now, Stupid, go and call the soothsayer; I

want to go calling if to-day is propitious. Go quickly, I tell you, and bring him here. I must find out if the wind and the water are good. You are so slow, Stupid!

GOLDEN LILY: (*Dejectedly*) Yes, honorable Mother-in-law. (*She goes out.*)

MRS. LING: (*To herself, as she looks in the glass*) Now if the soothsayer says the day is lucky for crossing the threshold, I'll dress up and go and see some of my neighbors. I'll put on my best—no, my second best clothes are good enough—better than theirs anyway. Won't I make them envious!

*Enter Golden Lily and the soothsayer.*

GOLDEN LILY: The soothsayer has come, Mother-in-law.

*Soothsayer bows Chinese fashion with hands clasped. Mrs. Ling, overawed, rises and bows in the same manner.*

MRS. LING: Stupid, give him a chair and a table. (*Golden Lily brings chair and table.*) Be seated, venerable soothsayer.

*Soothsayer seats himself before the table, clears his throat, casts his eyes up to the ceiling, clears his throat again.*

SOOTHSAYER: Madam, the all-wise is before you. He can tell your fate written in the pathway of the stars and can unfold the will of the gods. He can see far into the future and knows all that affects your fortune, both the great and the small.

MRS. LING: (*Greatly impressed*) Venerable soothsayer, I tremble at the thought of your wisdom. You who know the great and the small of my life, tell me, now, if this is a lucky day for me to journey forth from my threshold. Are the wind and the water favorable?

SOOTHSAYER: (*Casting his eyes upward and looking wise*) Are the wind and the water favorable? I will consult the book of the all-wise, the infallible guide for daily life. You were born (*looking in book he has drawn from his sleeve*)—

MRS. LING: (*Eagerly*) In the eleventh moon.

SOOTHSAYER: You need not say—the all-wise knows everything. The eleventh moon, of course, and—hem—hem—hem—the—sun—

MRS. LING: (*With still greater eagerness*) On the third sun.

SOOTHSAYER: (*Severely*) Do not interrupt. Certainly it was on the third sun (*fumbles at his book, scrutinizing the pages closely*). We will see if the charms agree with the infallible guide. (*While Mrs. Ling and Golden Lily look on with keen interest, the soothsayer dives down into the other sleeve and produces the charms, tosses them on the table three times. He clears his throat, casts his eyes up, looks solemn, then says oracularly*) The charms agree.

MRS. LING: And shall I meet any unlucky person?

SOOTHSAYER: (*Dives down into his sleeve and pulls out a mirror*) I will look into the mirror of fate where the image of all those whom you shall meet is reflected. (*Looks wisely into the mirror.*) Madam, if you ride through the street of Singular Good Fortune, you will meet no unlucky person.

MRS. LING: And shall I say any unlucky word?

SOOTHSAYER: (*Oracularly*) Madam, keep a silent tongue and you will utter no unlucky word.

MRS. LING: I am a woman of few words. That will be easy for me.

*Soothsayer shrugs his shoulders and pulls a face, sceptically.*

MRS. LING: And I shall travel in safety?

SOOTHSAYER: Madam, follow my instructions and you will travel in safety.

MRS. LING: Sweep House, go get a string of cash. Since the forecast is good, give him a long string.

*Golden Lily goes to the chest and produces a string of cash which she presents to the soothsayer who takes it solemnly and hangs it around his neck.*

SOOTHSAYER: (*Rising*) But beware of the evil eye, madam; beware!

MRS. LING: (*Rising*) That I will, but I beg you to leave me a charm, venerable master, which shall protect my house from its malign influences.

SOOTHSAYER: (*Taking a strip of colored paper from his sleeve*) Hang this on your door, madam. Do not fail.

MRS. LING: Sweep House shall do so at once.

SOOTHSAYER: (*Bowing Chinese fashion*) Sit! Sit!

MRS. LING: (*Bowing in same manner*) Slowly, slowly walk.

*Soothsayer goes out. Mrs. Ling, forgetting to give the charm to Golden Lily, puts it on the table beside her dressing-case.*

MRS. LING: Now, Stupid, take away the chair and the table. The wind and the water are good, so help me to dress. Get my gown out of my chest. No, not that one, the other one. You are so slow and so stupid! Why do you suppose I paid so much money for you when you were a baby! Bah, my son is to be pitied with such a wife as you! Come now, be smart. Fill my pipe. I haven't eaten smoke since I got up, and my stomach is faint. (*Golden Lily takes the pipe from the altar and prepares to fill it.*) Put more water in and pound the tobacco down well, stupid one.

GOLDEN LILY: (*Dejectedly hands the pipe to Mrs. Ling*) Yes, honorable Mother-in-law (*sniffles and wipes her eyes*).

MRS. LING: (*Smoking*) Come now, get my foot-warmer. See that there are fresh coals in it. (*Golden Lily does so.*) Well, put my feet on it. Oh, it's not half warm! Snuffling again, eh? Ungrateful creature! There is my sister-in-law, she beats her slave nearly every day, and you know I don't beat you unless I have to.

GOLDEN LILY: (*In muffled voice*) Yes—yes—honorable Mother-in-law.

MRS. LING: Come now, help me with these clothes. Fix my kimono, stupid one. You are so awkward! I shall certainly beat you if you are so clumsy. Well, how do I look? Can't you look up, foolish one? Are you blind?

GOLDEN LILY: Oh, honorable Mother-in-law, you are very handsome. You are like the Kuang Yen.

MRS. LING: (*Pleased*) Ha, ha, the Kuang Yen, indeed! Not so bad from such a foolish creature as you are. When I was young I was called a jade stone, I was so beautiful; but then, as the saying goes, three-tenths of beauty is beauty and seven-tenths is dress (*preening herself*). But you, Stupid, no matter how much fine dress you wore, could never be a Kuang Yen. Kuang Yen, indeed! Go and worship her, Daughter-in-law. Beg her to send you a son who will carry on the honorable name of Ling and will do reverence to my name—not a stupid girl like you. I shall curse you, remember, if you do not have a son, and you shall be despised and worthless in our family. So far only two worthless girls like yourself! Here I live on the street of Ten Thousand Grandsons and have only one grandson to my name, thanks to you. (*Golden Lily at the altar has lighted the candles and incense and now bows three times.*) Put up the papers and drive the evil spirits away, for I feel them about. (*She continues to smoke.*) See that they do not intercept your prayers.

*Golden Lily pins the idol papers on the altar. Enter Precious Gold, Beautiful Pearl, and Old Rag running, breathless and frightened.*

CHILDREN: (*Together*) Oh, Mother! Mother! MOTHER!

MRS. LING and GOLDEN LILY: (*Together*) What's the matter? What's the matter?

PRECIOUS GOLD: (*Pointing to the door*) Hi, ya! There's a foreign woman coming down the street. We were standing at the outer door of the court, and we saw the foreign woman coming.

MRS. LING: (*Sternly*) You should not stand at the outer door. Haven't I told you many times that it is very shameful for girls to appear out of doors? There will be a scandal among the neighbors if you do so,

and worse still, you will displease the spirit of your great-great-grandmother, who was famous because of her virtue. For twelve years she never looked outside of her door.

PRECIOUS GOLD: It must have been very dull, Grandmother.

MRS. LING: Dull! It was very virtuous. You children stay in the house in future or I shall punish you. Those foreign people will steal you and shut you up in their dark cellars. Daughter-in-law, go and see if the foreign devil is coming. (*Golden Lily goes to the door and peers out. The children follow, clinging to her.*) Well, Stupid, what do you see?

GOLDEN LILY: She is coming here. She is knocking. Shall I let her in?

MRS. LING: (*Hesitates*) No—well—yes—yes—let her come. I have never invited one of those foreign barbarians into my house, but it is the fashion nowadays to let them come and see the house. I despise them, but let her come. Children, come here. Stay beside me. I have heard they make medicine out of children's eyes and do horrible things.

*Enter Golden Lily with Miss Woodby. Mrs. Ling rises and both women bow ceremoniously in Chinese fashion.*

MISS WOODBY: Peace, honorable madam.

MRS. LING: (*Stiffly*) I invite you to sit.

MISS WOODBY: You sit first, honorable madam.

MRS. LING: You sit first. (*They press each other to sit. Finally both sit at once.*) Have you eaten rice?

MISS WOODBY: I have eaten. Have you eaten rice?

MRS. LING: Not yet eaten. Daughter-in-law, pass the pipe.

*Golden Lily brings the pipe which is on the corner of the altar and offers it with both hands to Miss Woodby.*

MISS WOODBY: No thank you (*waves it aside with a motion of her hand*).

MRS. LING: (*Surprised*) Don't you eat smoke?

MISS WOODBY: No thank you. We foreign women do not smoke.

MRS. LING: Hi, ya! Is that so? Is that your custom? How curious!

MISS WOODBY: Yes, we think it is not good for our health.

MRS. LING: Now that is strange. I have very little strength if I do not eat smoke. Daughter-in-law, pass the tea. (*From the altar Golden Lily brings cups of tea and with both hands presents them, one at a time, to Miss Woodby and Mrs. Ling.*) Will the honorable lady have some of this bad tasting tea? It's not fit to drink.

MISS WOODBY: You drink first, honorable madame.

MRS. LING: No, you drink first.

MISS WOODBY: No, you drink first.

*Both urge each other to drink in this manner, but finally both drink together.*

MRS. LING: You speak our language very well.

MISS WOODBY: Oh, very little and very poorly. My brogue is very heavy.

MRS. LING: You must be very clever to speak our language so well. How long have you been in our country?

MISS WOODBY: Five years.

MRS. LING: (*In exaggerated astonishment*) Five years! Hi, ya! But you are clever! Wonderful! You speak just like a native, so plainly! (*Turning to Golden Lily, aside*) Her brogue is so heavy, I can't understand half she says.

GOLDEN LILY: (*Aside*) Oh hush, Mother-in-law; she will hear you! (*To Miss Woodby*) You speak our language very plainly, teacher.

MRS. LING: How old are you, teacher?

MISS WOODBY: Thirty-five, nearly.

MRS. LING: From your venerable appearance I would have taken you for much older. (*Miss Woodby laughs. Mrs. Ling feels Miss Woodby's dress*) You have very pretty clothes. How many tiers of clothing have you on? Aren't you very cold?

MISS WOODBY: Oh, no. See! I have two tiers of clothing on (*showing her skirt and underskirt*). How many tiers have you?

MRS. LING: Oh, I have four tiers (*Shows two or three kimonos*).

GOLDEN LILY: (*Looking closely at Miss Woodby's hair*) Teacher, do you comb your hair?

MISS WOODBY: (*Laughing*) Oh, yes indeed, several times a day!

GOLDEN LILY: (*Aside to Mrs. Ling*) It's so frowzy, Mother-in-law!

MISS WOODBY: (*Turning to Golden Lily*) But whose are these children? Are they yours?

GOLDEN LILY: The girls are mine, the boy is their cousin.

MISS WOODBY: They are very pretty children.

MRS. LING: Oh, very homely, very homely. Not smart.

MISS WOODBY: What are your names, children? (*Children hide behind their mother and grandmother.*) You need not be afraid of me. I love children. Come, tell me your name (*speaking coaxingly to Precious Gold*).

MRS. LING: Her name (*pointing to Precious Gold*) is Precious Gold, and second sister's name is Beautiful Pearl. Boy's name is Old Rag. That's his milk name. When he goes to school to have the darkness lifted, he will be called Ink Grinder.

MISS WOODBY: I understand you give these names to the boy to protect him from the evil spirits.

MRS. LING: To be sure,—for no other reason.

MISS WOODBY: And do you think the evil spirits will not touch your little girls?

MRS. LING: Oh, no, they are only girls. Spirits do not think it worth while to harm them.

MISS WOODBY: And what is that the little boy wears about his neck?

MRS. LING: That is a charm to keep the evil spirits away. Boys are our greatest treasure, and we Chinese take good care of them. We say, "One deformed son is worth more than eighteen daughters as wise as the apostles of Buddha."

MISS WOODBY: But why do you not consider your girls precious also?

MRS. LING: Girls!—Girls are as dangerous as smuggled salt. You always lose your money on girls. Besides, girls have no brains. They are stupid and worthless creatures. Look at my daughter-in-law, see how stupid and ignorant she is.

MISS WOODBY: But she could be taught. If she had a chance, she could learn. Has she ever been to school?

MRS. LING: To school! No, indeed! What would she go to school for? She couldn't learn. Could you, stupid one?

GOLDEN LILY: (*With eyes cast down and very meekly*) No, honorable Mother-in-law.

MRS. LING: You haven't any brains, have you?

GOLDEN LILY: No, honorable Mother-in-law.

MRS. LING: You're only a poor, stupid girl, aren't you?

GOLDEN LILY: Yes, honorable Mother-in-law.

MRS. LING: My son, now, is very clever. His stomach is full of wisdom. He knows all the wise sayings of the sages.

MISS WOODBY: But if you would allow his wife to go to school, she would become wise too. I came to China to teach women like your daughter-in-law, and little children like these. I have a school where they may learn. Do let them come to me. You love this great country of yours. We missionaries love China too, and desire her good. You Chinese women have many burdens, many sorrows. We American women have come to help you. We have come to tell you the Jesus way, that you may know the joy and happiness of it.

MRS. LING: (*As they both rise*) Honorable teacher, I cannot offend my ancestors by listening to you. They would punish me if I did so and send plague and disease upon me. I do not like the way you foreign-

ers come to our country and upset our customs. We are very well as we are, and we do not wish you here.

MISS WOODBY: (*Smiling*) But perhaps you will come and call on me. Come and see my house some day, and look around our school. And let the children and your daughter-in-law come too.

*Mrs. Ling bows stiffly.*

GOLDEN LILY: I greatly thank you, honorable teacher.

*All bow ceremoniously, Chinese fashion, Miss Woodby still bowing as she backs to the door.*

MISS WOODBY: Peace, peace to you all. (*She goes out.*)

MRS. LING: (*Turning to Golden Lily and speaking sharply*) Stupid one, never allow a foreigner to come into my house again. Do you hear? I hate and despise them. And I forbid you going near them—you or the children. I will have none of their religion. (*In sudden recollection*) Ah! the soothsayer! What did he say? Beware of the evil eye. What have you done with his charm, lazy one? (*Shrilly*) You did not hang it on the door and this is the result. The evil eye of that foreign woman is upon us. No telling what disaster will come to us now. Where is the charm? What have you done with it?

GOLDEN LILY: (*Taking it up from the table*) Here it is, Mother-in-law.

MRS. LING: Well, what did you put it there for? Go fasten it to the door and drive away the influences of the evil eye of that foreign woman. (*Golden Lily fastens the charm on the door.*) Now you and the children go and worship the Kuang Yen. (*Outside the sound of a gong is heard.*) It is the hour of prayer. (*Gong sounds again.*) The priests are chanting.

*Golden Lily and the three children stand before the altar, bowing in unison three times while the gong-beating continues. The priests are heard chanting the Buddhist rites "Ah-me-doh-ah-me-doh-ah-me-doh-ah-me-doh-ah-me-doh-ah-me-doh" in a prolonged, chanting tone. Curtain is drawn, and the priests sing:*



Dzao T'ien dzao di iu dzao zen Da yiu zen nai dz pe zen  
Nyun pen T'ien dang da Tso - tsai, Tsao van dzen sin yao chin pai.

*Curtain opens, the gong sounds, and the chanting is continued while the children and Golden Lily stand in tableau before the altar.*

CURTAIN

## Scene II

Sitting room in a missionary home. The furniture is willow; matting on floor; in the center and front a table, on each side of which is a rocking chair; at the back and center a bookcase; on the left of table a small desk partly facing the audience; pictures on the walls, and flowers and ferns suitably arranged about the room.

*Dr. Woodby sits at the desk writing, tears up sheets of paper, throws them in waste basket, folds others, puts them in envelopes, stamps envelopes, seals them. A clock on the book-shelf strikes nine. She glances up at it, then turns to her work again. School bell sounds from without. Singing is heard in the distance. She rises and listens at the door. Smiles as she turns to the desk again. Enter Miss Woodby hurriedly with books and reports in her hand. She places them on the table and sits in the chair to the right.*

MISS WOODBY: Good morning, Lucy.

DR. WOODBY: Good morning, Frances.

MISS WOODBY: Where did you go so early this morning that I did not see you at breakfast?

DR. WOODBY: (*Takes up her letters and moves to the table seating herself in the left chair.*) I was called out to see a patient and could not get back in time for breakfast. When I returned, Heavenly Wisdom said you had already gone to school.

MISS WOODBY: Yes, we are just through chapel services. Did you hear us singing?

DR. WOODBY: Indeed I did. It always thrills me when I hear those dear girls singing. Your chapel services are one of the most inspiring features of our life here. I can think of no greater work than this that you are doing among the girls in China.

MISS WOODBY: Unless it is yours, my dear. Doors that are closed to me are opened eagerly for you. You are sought for the gift of healing.

DR. WOODBY: That is true. Though I should not be satisfied unless I could also give spiritual comfort together with healing. (*Takes up one of her letters.*) I am writing to our society at home telling them of your work and mine.

MISS WOODBY: Oh, then do not forget to tell them how unspeakably happy we are in doing it; how crammed full of interest our days are. I fancy sometimes the folks at home pity us for living out here alone; but if they could see our girls in school, if they could see their bright, eager faces, and if they could see you as you go to the hospital and clinics making life better for thousands, surely they would envy

rather than pity us. Of course, they must know we do have our hardships and disappointments, many of them; but the joy of the work far outweighs these.

DR. WOODBY: Let me read you what I have written. (*Reading from her letter*) "I cannot find words to express the joy and satisfaction of this work. We are busy every minute of the day and sometimes of the night too, but happy—Oh, so happy! You must come and see for yourselves if you would be convinced. Do come, all of you." (*Puts the letter in an envelope and seals it.*)

MISS WOODBY: It surely would be exciting if all those dear ladies should suddenly descend upon us.

DR. WOODBY: Yes, wouldn't it? Fancy some of those good immaculate housekeepers over there in little old United States being obliged to sleep in some of the places we sleep in when we are touring the field. Wouldn't they shiver with horror!

MISS WOODBY: However, I think most of them would settle down just as we do and think it a great life.

DR. WOODBY: Probably they would. I hope so anyway. (*Rings the bell.*) We could put them all to work certainly, if they were here. (*Enter Heavenly Wisdom. Whisks in briskly.*) Heavenly Wisdom, take these letters to the postman at once. You must hurry for I want them to go on the next steamer.

HEAVENLY WISDOM: (*Smiles broadly and bows*) Yes, missy. My catches him all the samee, chop chop. My catchee him number one plopper. (*Whisks out, putting the letter in the top of his cap and placing his cap on his head.*)

MISS WOODBY: Dear old Heavenly Wisdom! His name is among the faithful; but what a whirlwind he is. He upsets all our traditional beliefs in respect to Oriental leisure and repose. When he says he will do a thing "chop, chop," we know he will do it with electric speed.

DR. WOODBY: But, oh, if he did not use that awful pidjin English on us. Why will he not speak in Chinese? He evidently distrusts our ability to do justice to his native tongue.

MISS WOODBY: And for that I confess he has some justification. Doubtless we do murder the celestial language horridly. It was only yesterday, you remember, you ordered fruit for dinner, and because you gave the wrong tone, you got sheep's tails.

DR. WOODBY: (*Laughs*) Funny, wasn't it? I am afraid I make many a slip in tone. I haven't forgotten the time the cook put a cup of sugar in the gravy instead of hot water because I made a mistake between the first and the fifth tone. (*Both laugh.*)

MISS WOODBY: Oh, this language! Its difficulties are not to be numbered.

(*She takes up some of her reports, begins folding them, slipping some of them into envelopes.*)

DR. WOODBY: Here, I'll help you. (*She takes a few and folds them also. They both work a moment in silence, then Miss Woodby sighs.*) Why the sigh, my dear?

MISS WOODBY: Oh—you remember—I told you about the family I called upon the other day, Mrs. Ling and her daughter-in-law?

DR. WOODBY: Yes, I remember. You were all used up about it when you reached home.

MISS WOODBY: Well, I am worried about them. I can't get them out of my mind for some reason. The girl's face haunts me. It was absolutely woe-begone. She was so crushed and pitiful, clearly so unhappy (*rising and walking back and forth behind the table*). Oh, I tell you, Lucy, I feel desperate sometimes when I see girls like Golden Lily ground to dust, trampled upon, the drudge and slave of the whole family! I feel as though I must help her. But how am I to reach her! The doors are closed against me, and I feel powerless.

DR. WOODBY: However, Mrs. Ling did receive you. That's something. I didn't suppose she would even do that much.

MISS WOODBY: No, I scarcely expected that myself; but she was only coldly civil. Mrs. Greatheart, the Bible woman, says she is a regular vixen. At present Mrs. Ling's son, Golden Lily's husband, is away on business in the North and during his absence Mrs. Ling is even more tyrannical than usual towards his wife. Mrs. Greatheart says Golden Lily would like to attend our services at Eastgate but she does not dare to because her mother-in-law is so bitterly opposed to foreigners. (*Seating herself*) Mrs. Greatheart is tremendously stirred up about it, but feels as helpless to act as I do. Curiously enough, although I feel this burning indignation towards Mrs. Ling, I pity her, too, and I long as much to help her as to emancipate Golden Lily from her clutches. There is something about her that attracts me powerfully. She has a really strong, forceful character. You know how some of these Chinese women have that characteristic.

DR. WOODBY: (*Rising*) Yes, I have seen them dominate the whole family,—husband and all.

MISS WOODBY: From what Mrs. Greatheart tells me, I judge Mr. Ling is of the henpecked variety.

DR. WOODBY: I shouldn't wonder if he were. But it is just that sort of woman who can be of immense power for good if one can reach them.

MISS WOODBY: Oh, Mrs. Ling must be won! But how!

DR. WOODBY: (*Going over to her sister and placing her hand on her shoulder*) My dear, it can only be done by the power of the still, small voice.

MISS WOODBY: (*Taking her hand*) You dear old Saw-bones! I am so impatient—I forget so often! But you are my blessed reminder.

DR. WOODBY: (*With great impressiveness*) There is nothing, Frances, nothing so potent in all the world as the still, small voice of the spirit.

MISS WOODBY: I know it, Lucy. Help me to remember!

DR. WOODBY: (*As she walks to the door*) My dear, we will help each other to remember. (*She goes out at left.*)

*Miss Woodby takes up reports, slips some into envelopes and seals them. Enter Heavenly Wisdom from the right.*

HEAVENLY WISDOM: Missy, teacher, one little missy wanche comee look see. Coolie man him talkee, talkee alle time, talkee too much.

MISS WOODBY: Oh, very well. Bring her in here, Heavenly Wisdom. (*Continues her work.*)

*Heavenly Wisdom goes out at the right. Loud voices are heard without.*

COOLIE: (*From outside*) I tell you I will come in.

HEAVENLY WISDOM: (*Just outside the door*) No can do, no can do. Too dirty.

COOLIE: Dirty, nothing! She won't go less I go too, and the baggage goes where I go, you old paper tiger.

MISS WOODBY: (*Going to the door*) Why, what is the matter, Heavenly Wisdom?

HEAVENLY WISDOM: Too much blobbery. Him make too much blobbery.

MISS WOODBY: Well, Heavenly Wisdom, you seem to be making a good deal of noise yourself.

HEAVENLY WISDOM: Him alle samee, wanche come with leetle sister. No can do. No plopper.

MISS WOODBY: Oh, it's proper enough. Let him come, if he must, and the baggage too.

*Enter Plum Blossom, very shy and timid, with umbrella, bundle, and teapot. Enter Coolie carrying a pole on his shoulder from one end of which hangs a small trunk or basket and from the other, a roll of bedding. He puts the baggage down.*

COOLIE: Hi, ya! (*Wipes his face with his sleeve.*) Hi, ya! That 'ere's a heavy load for one man. That 'ere paper tiger (*pointing with his lips toward the door*) didn't want to let me in, but said I, I ain't going to let that leetle sister part from me nor the baggage neither 'till I put

them in your hands. That's her bed and that's her clothes (*pointing with his foot*). Hi, ya! (*wiping his face again.*) It's a long mile we've come.

MISS WOODBY: Where have you come from?

COOLIE: (*Pointing with his lips*) Small Horse Village, up there in Bamboo Mountains. (*Seats himself in a chair to the right.*) It's a long way for the leetle one. Twenty miles (*indicating with his ten fingers out-spread*). Understand? Her and me come down with some of the neighbors that was bringin' down tea and rice from up there. Hi, ya! Had to get up at cock-crowing. We are mighty tired and hungry. Just had a bite over there on the street of Refreshing Breezes. (*Slight pause.*) When we was drinkin' our tea over there, a woman come along and wanted to know where the foreign devil's school was. She was cryin' like. Looked as if she felt pretty bad, and I said, "Just come right along with us. We're goin' to the foreign devil's school ourselves." So she come along.

MISS WOODBY: And where is she now?

COOLIE: (*Pointing with his lips*) Out there. She was cryin' all the time. Wanted to see the teacher woman.

MISS WOODBY: We will see her presently. Now tell me, little sister, what's your name?

*Little girl moves nearer to Coolie, hangs her head lower but does not speak.*

COOLIE: Plum Blossom, that's her name.

MISS WOODBY: How old are you, Plum Blossom? Can't you speak the language?

COOLIE: She's afraid. She can talk fast a-plenty at home. Tongue claps all day like a water-wheel when she ain't afeared.

MISS WOODBY: Don't be afraid, Plum Blossom. Come tell me how old you are.

*Plum Blossom hangs her head still lower.*

COOLIE: (*Indicating with his fingers*) Ten and two. Understand? Plenty old enough to be a little stay-at-home, but her father's got some of those new-fangled ideas. He wants her to be a learned book woman, —wants her to stuff her stomach full of words just like a man's. Can't be done. Now there's my wife, Old Broom and Dustpan, she's number one good when it comes to hoein' rice and plowin' and carryin' tea—just as good as me, but when it comes to learnin' (*laughs*), she's as stupid as a pig. Don't think much of these new foreign idees anyhow.

MISS WOODBY: (*Smiling*) Oh, don't you? Why not? (*Slipping reports into envelopes.*)

COOLIE: Why, a man told me these foreign devil schools say the world is round. Round! (*Laughs*) Any fool can see it's flat, flat as my hand, 'cept where there're mountains like Bamboo Mountains.

*Miss Woodby laughing, seals one of her envelopes with her tongue. The coolie looks on, his eyes widening in amazement. When Miss Woodby takes up a second report and seals it, his astonishment bursts into words.*

COOLIE: Hi, ya! There! What—you doin'? Leetle sister, look, look at her! Hi, ya! There! (*He brushes past little sister and peers into the face of Miss Woodby, then takes up an envelope, looking at it curiously.*)

MISS WOODBY: Well, what's the matter?

COOLIE: Say, what kind of glue have you got on your tongue? We Chinese haven't any glue like that on our tongues.

MISS WOODBY: (*Puzzled*) Glue! On my tongue?

COOLIE: Yes, what you stuck the letter with.

MISS WOODBY: (*Gradually understanding*) Oh! (*laughing*) the glue is not on my tongue. It is on the envelope, see? (*She shows him an envelope.*) Now you try it.

*The coolie takes the envelope and rubs his tongue over it and presses it between his hands.*

COOLIE: Hi, ya, leetle sister, look at that! Ain't that queer? Everything is queer about these foreigners. (*Looks around the room.*) Now ain't this a queer lookin' house, Plum Blossom?

*Plum Blossom whispers to him.*

COOLIE: Clean, did you say? Yes, but it has a queer foreign smell, hasn't it (*sniffing the air*)?

*Miss Woodby rings the bell. Enter Heavenly Wisdom.*

MISS WOODBY: Call one of the teachers, Heavenly Wisdom. Call Big Sister. Now Plum Blossom, don't be afraid. You will be happy when you get used to us.

COOLIE: She cried her eyes out to come, and I swear she'll cry her eyes out to get home. Contrary, just like a woman.

MISS WOODBY: (*Patting her shoulder.*) Oh no, she is going to be very happy with the girls. (*Plum Blossom looks up and smiles. Enter Big Sister.*) Big Sister, here's a new little girl. Take her to the junior department and give her something to eat and show the carrier where to take the bedding.

BIG SISTER: Yes, teacher, I will go at once.

*Coolie takes up his load and Plum Blossom and he follow Big Sister to the door. After they pass out, Big Sister turns at the door.*

BIG SISTER: Oh teacher, there's a woman in the courtyard who wants to see you. She came with these people.

MISS WOODBY: Oh, yes, the load bearer spoke of some one he met on the road. Show her the way here.

*Miss Woodby seats herself at the table and is looking over her reports when Golden Lily enters and stands timidly at the door.*

GOLDEN LILY: (*Hesitatingly*) Teacher!

MISS WOODBY: (*Looking up*) Why!—Why! You, Golden Lily! (*Rises and meets her*) It's you? How did you get here? Come, sit, sit.

GOLDEN LILY: (*Beginning to cry*) I—I—I!

MISS WOODBY: Why, there now, don't cry. Tell me about it.

GOLDEN LILY: (*Sobbing*) I—I!

MISS WOODBY: There! There! Don't cry. Tell me what the trouble is.

GOLDEN LILY: I ran—I ran away.

MISS WOODBY: You ran away? Couldn't stand it any longer?

GOLDEN LILY: No,—no. She—she—burned—my—arm. She was so angry.

MISS WOODBY: (*Horrified*) What! You mean she has burned you?

GOLDEN LILY: Yes, with incense burners (*pulls up her sleeve and shows a scarred arm*).

MISS WOODBY: Oh, dear, dear! Horrible. I must call the doctor. (*Rings the bell and writes a note. Enter Heavenly Wisdom.*) Heavenly Wisdom, take this note to the hospital.

HEAVENLY WISDOM: Yes, missy. (*He goes out.*)

MISS WOODBY: (*Bending over Golden Lily*) Oh, this is dreadful. You poor child.

GOLDEN LILY: The pain was terrible. It is not so bad now. She said she would burn the other arm to-day, so I ran away. Oh, she will be very, very angry when she finds it out.

*Enter Sister Number Three.*

MISS WOODBY: Oh, Sister Number Three, the doctor could not come?

SISTER NUMBER THREE: No, but she told me to take the patient to the hospital. (*Looks at the arm*) What a pity! It's a bad burn, but we can help you.

GOLDEN LILY: And you will let me stay with you? Oh, please do not send me back there!

MISS WOODBY: (*As they all move to the door*) Yes, you may stay—for the present at least.

(*Golden Lily goes out. Sister Number Three turns back to speak to Miss Woodby.*)

SISTER NUMBER THREE: (*With alarmed face*) But teacher, won't they send for her?

MISS WOODBY: (*Sighing*) I suppose so, Sister Number Three; but in the meantime we can hope, and best of all, we can pray for the still small voice to enter the mother-in-law's heart.

SISTER NUMBER THREE: (*Rolls her eyes up incredulously, as she exclaims*) The heart of the Honorable Mrs. Ling!

CURTAIN

### Scene III

*Missionary sitting room. Heavenly Wisdom bustling about dusting and sweeping. He sweeps the dust under the book-shelves. While he works, his queue gets in his way. He twists it around his head, but, as it does not stay there, he twirls it about his neck. He quickly unwinds it when Miss Woodby enters. Enter Miss Woodby, looking about the room.*

MISS WOODBY: Oh, Heavenly Wisdom, my sister has not come in yet, has she?

HEAVENLY WISDOM: No, missy, him no comee. Him do big pidjin.

MISS WOODBY: Yes, I know she is busy. (*Sits down at the table. Works a moment.*) Oh, Heavenly Wisdom, did you buy that food I spoke of for the school?

HEAVENLY WISDOM: Less, missy my buy heapee chow chow.

MISS WOODBY: Rice?

HEAVENLY WISDOM: (*Counting on fingers*) Less, lice.

MISS WOODBY: And fruit?

HEAVENLY WISDOM: Less, flute.

MISS WOODBY: And fish?

HEAVENLY WISDOM: Less, fliss. My buy velly good chow chow. Number one ploppa chow chow. My no likee buy bad chow chow.

MISS WOODBY: Very well. That will do. (*Turns to her work again*)

HEAVENLY WISDOM: (*Hesitating*) Missy.

MISS WOODBY: Yes, what is it, Heavenly Wisdom?

HEAVENLY WISDOM: My wantche go 'way. Go play leetle bit.

MISS WOODBY: You mean you want a day off?

HEAVENLY WISDOM: Less, Missy. My wantche go catchee one piecee wifo.

MISS WOODBY: Oh, I see. You want to get married?

HEAVENLY WISDOM: Less. Number one good wifo.

MISS WOODBY: She has big feet, I suppose.

HEAVENLY WISDOM: No, him no have big feet. Him have leetle feet (*indicating the size with finger and thumb*). Nice leetle feet. Leetle feet more better.

MISS WOODBY: More better! Why are little feet more better?

HEAVENLY WISDOM: Him no can walkee too muchee, then, him no can talkee too muchee. Him more quiet, more better.

MISS WOODBY: Well, we won't discuss that now. You may go to-morrow if you wish.

HEAVENLY WISDOM: Tankee, missy. (*Goes out, turns, puts his head through the door into the room again*) Oh, missy, you wanche stewed Irish for dinna?

MISS WOODBY: (*Puzzled*) Stewed Irish for dinner? Oh! yes, certainly. Irish stew. (*Exit Heavenly Wisdom on the left. Enter Dr. Woodby on the right.*) Well I am glad you're here, Lucy. I have been waiting for you, hoping you would come in. I need your advice about Golden Lily.

DR. WOODBY: Yes, what is it?

MISS WOODBY: Her arm is better, is it not?

DR. WOODBY: Quite well, now. It was a bad burn, though. Imagine the cruelty of such a thing! She must have suffered terribly. But how happy she seems to be now, going to school here with the other girls.

MISS WOODBY: That's just it, she is happy. And the girls in the school love her so, they will do anything for her. Have you noticed the new clothes she is wearing? Those belong to different girls in the school. They have lent them to her. But oh dear, I am afraid every day some one will come and take her away.

DR. WOODBY: Well, we did the only thing there was to do. We took the girl in and cared for her.

MISS WOODBY: And I want to keep her here. I feel as though we must save her from the tyranny of that mother-in-law.

*Loud knocking from outside.*

VOICE SHOUTING: Open the door there, gatekeeper. Hi, ya! Open the door there. (*Gong beats.*)

MISS WOODBY: (*Rising and looking into the distance*) What is the matter, I wonder. Some one must be coming into the compound.

DR. WOODBY: Some one of importance, too, evidently. (*Rises*) Such a commotion is not made over an ordinary person. (*Goes to the door and looks out.*) It must be an official, to judge by the size of his retinue,—four chair-bearers, a heralder,—and here comes the runner with the official card. What can it mean!

MISS WOODBY: Oh, Lucy, do you suppose—? Oh, it may be— Don't you see? It must be some one come to take Golden Lily away.

DR. WOODBY: Well, we shall soon know. Here comes Heavenly Wisdom.

*Enter Heavenly Wisdom with a large red envelope.*

HEAVENLY WISDOM: (*Excitedly*) One big pidjin man! Him comee—look, see!

MISS WOODBY: Very well, bring him here. (*Exit Heavenly Wisdom.*) Dear, dear, what shall we do! (*Both take the card from the envelope*

*and look at it.)* Yes, see, the Honorable Ling, the husband himself has come.

DR. WOODBY: A most unusual proceeding. A matter of this kind is usually taken up through a go-between; but, if the Honorable Ling wishes to confer with you personally, all the better. The go-between is always an obstruction to a straightforward understanding. Let's see the head of the Ling family, by all means.

MISS WOODBY: The head in name only. I fancy he is an underling compared to the Honorable Mrs. Ling.

DR. WOODBY: Sorry I can't stay and see the proceedings through, but I must go.

MISS WOODBY: Oh, Lucy, can't you stay and help me? How can I ever get through the round and square of Chinese etiquette without your prompting,—to say nothing of more important matters?

DR. WOODBY: I really can't. I have an important operation this morning and I must be off now. As for the round and the square, no foreigner can know that fully; so be as brief as decency will allow. As for knowing what to do about Golden Lily, I am sure you will have wisdom. Good bye, my dear. (*She goes toward the door.*) Here comes the Honorable Ling.

*Exit Dr. Woodby on the left. Heavenly Wisdom opens the door at right. Honorable Ling enters. He bows profoundly Chinese fashion. Miss Woodby, also, bows in the same manner.*

MISS WOODBY: Sit, honorable gentleman. Be seated Honorable Ling.

HONORABLE LING: I am too contemptible to sit in your honorable chair.

MISS WOODBY: I beg you to sit in my humble chair.

HONORABLE LING: I am not worthy to come under your honorable roof.

MISS WOODBY: My humble roof is honored to receive your most distinguished person. I invite you to sit.

HONORABLE LING: I will sit, but 'tis shameful for me to place my contemptible person before your honorable self.

*They both sit at the same time. The Honorable Ling removes his large spectacles as a mark of respect. Seats himself with knees spread and feet placed squarely before him. He looks around rather embarrassed as though troubled to find words.*

Honorable madam, I have left my dirty and disreputable home and have come to your honorable and distinguished roof to talk with your honorable self on important business.

MISS WOODBY: (*Bows*) Important business?

HONORABLE LING: It is about my unworthy son's Stay-at-Home.

MISS WOODBY: Your son's Stay-at-Home?

HONORABLE LING: Yes, your honorable self. She ran away, and my Dull Thorn has had people looking everywhere for her—has had all the wells searched—thought she had drowned herself. Only to-day we heard that she was under your honorable roof.

MISS WOODBY: Yes, your daughter-in-law is here.

HONORABLE LING: My Dull Thorn sends word to your honorable self that my son's Stay-at-Home must return at once. My Dull Thorn is a very determined woman. All the people of my humble roof must obey her. She is very angry with my son's Stay-at-Home. I am not angry; I am sorry for her. I do not make her return to my house; but my Dull Thorn would be very angry if she comes not.

MISS WOODBY: Madam Ling does not like foreigners.

HONORABLE LING: No, she does not like. I like them. I want my children to come to your foreign schools. I dare not say one word. My Dull Thorn gets so angry when I speak so. I go to foreign worship house sometimes. My Dull Thorn she does not know I go there. She would curse me, if she knew. She would take opium to revenge me, if she knew. I tell my Dull Thorn that missionaries come to help my people, but she will not listen.

MISS WOODBY: I am very glad that you feel as you do, and some day I am sure Mrs. Ling will change her opinion of us. Now about Golden Lily, your daughter-in-law. You think she cannot stay here with us and go to school?

HONORABLE LING: No—No. It will not do. My Dull Thorn is unwilling. I dare not defy her. She must go home.

MISS WOODBY: I am sorry, very sorry, for we could help your daughter-in-law and give her a happy life; but we will see that she gets home to-day. You will try and protect her, will you not? Do not let Madam Ling abuse her. I beg you will restrain her from doing further harm.

HONORABLE LING: It is hard; but I will try, honorable madam. (*Gets up and bows ceremoniously.*) Be seated, honorable madam.

MISS WOODBY: (*Also bowing*) Slowly, slowly walk.

HONORABLE LING: (*Retiring to the door*) Sit, sit, honorable madam.

*Exit Honorable Ling. Miss Woodby sits down sighing.*

MISS WOODBY: Well, that's over! Poor Golden Lily! I can't bear to tell her, but I must. (*Rings the bell. Enter Heavenly Wisdom.*) Heavenly Wisdom, tell Golden Lily to come to me.

*As Heavenly Wisdom turns, Golden Lily rushes in and flings her-*

*self down beside Miss Woodby, burying her face in her lap. Exit Heavenly Wisdom.*

GOLDEN LILY: Oh, teacher, I know, I know. I have heard. She has sent for me. Oh, how can I bear it!

MISS WOODBY: Poor child! I am so sorry! Yes, Mrs. Ling says you must go back. There is no help for it. You must go home. It is very hard for you, I know (*strokes her head*), but you will try to be brave and patient; and afterwards you will try to remember all that you have learned here. You will remember the words of the Great Teacher that we have been reading about.

GOLDEN LILY: (*Sobbing*) Yes—yes—I—will—try—and—remember.

MISS WOODBY: (*Both rising*) And you will pray for your mother-in-law. You will win her by love and kindness, and she will come to see that the Christian teaching is a great and good thing and not an evil, as she supposes.

GOLDEN LILY: I—will—remember.

MISS WOODBY: And, Golden Lily, remember I am always your friend. I will pray for you and I will help you, if I can.

GOLDEN LILY: (*Backing slowly to the door, her face partly buried in her arm*) Good bye, dear teacher, good bye!

MISS WOODBY: (*Waving her hand sadly*) Good bye, Golden Lily.

*As the curtain is drawn slowly, the schoolgirl voices are heard singing very softly in the distance, the last line of "God be with you till we meet again."*

CURTAIN

## Scene IV

*In Mrs. Ling's courtyard. Golden Lily is seen washing at a tub in the center front of stage. At the back extending from right to left is a long pole filled with Chinese clothes hung out to dry. On empty poles Golden Lily hangs up the clothes that she rinses from the tub. As she does so, she sings a hymn to an old Chinese melody.*

Je - sus loves me ev - 'ry day, He will keep me all the way, He will  
help me bear the load, He will lead me up to God; If I fol - low  
and o - bey, He will nev - er let me stray. He will nev - er let me stray.

*She continues humming the melody as she hangs up the clothes and smoothes out the creases of those already hung out, then returns to the tub.*

GOLDEN LILY: (*To herself*) Hi, ya! Sometimes it seems as if I couldn't bear the load any longer. Mother-in-law gets harder to please every day. Nothing suits her, and I slave from morning to night, washing, cooking, running here and there for her. She flies into a temper over the least thing. She hates me more than ever since I ran away to the missionary school. How she did beat me for it when I got home!

PRECIOUS GOLD: (*Running in*) Mother!

GOLDEN LILY: (*Startled*) Oh! Precious Gold, you frightened me so.

PRECIOUS GOLD: I'm sorry, Mother, but what were you singing just now.  
It's very good to hear.

GOLDEN LILY: That is a Christian hymn. You must not tell Grandmother that you hear me singing it.

PRECIOUS GOLD: (*Nodding her head understandingly*) No, I won't tell her. Did you learn to sing it at that wicked foreign school?

GOLDEN LILY: Hush, child, do not say that.

PRECIOUS GOLD: But Grandmother says they take children's eyes out and make medicine of them.

GOLDEN LILY: Oh! that is not true, Precious Gold. The children in the

foreign school are very happy there learning many beautiful things, and everybody loves them.

PRECIOUS GOLD: What did you learn there, Mother? Did you sing all the time?

GOLDEN LILY: Oh—no—child. We sang a great deal, but they taught me to read, too, and to write, and—and (*she hesitates with a thoughtful, far away look*)—

PRECIOUS GOLD: (*Impatiently*) And what else, Mother?

GOLDEN LILY: (*Very slowly*) It was so—so wonderful! They—taught me about—the—Jesus way.

PRECIOUS GOLD: The Jesus way, Mother. What is that?

GOLDEN LILY: (*Still slowly*) I can't—explain very well, Precious Gold. I am so stupid, and I was there such a—little while (*wistfully*). I don't understand it, myself. Teacher said that the Jesus way was to love the people that hated you and—to be kind to those who ill-treated you and—if any one strikes you—on one cheek (*indicating the right cheek with her right hand*) you must turn the other also (*indicating the left cheek*).

PRECIOUS GOLD: (*Decidedly*) I don't. I scratch! I bite!

GOLDEN LILY: (*Shaking her head*) But that is not the Jesus way. Oh!—it's hard. Oh,—very—very—hard.

MRS. LING: (*Off stage*) Precious Gold! Precious Gold! Where is that good-for-nothing child?

PRECIOUS GOLD: (*In loud whisper*) It's Grandmother.

GOLDEN LILY: Go, child, and remember you must not say a word.

PRECIOUS GOLD: No—no—I won't, Mother. (*Runs off stage calling loudly.*) Coming, Grandmother.

GOLDEN LILY: (*Begins washing listlessly, then pauses*) If any one strikes you on one cheek (*indicating with her hand the right cheek*), you must turn—the other also (*indicating the left cheek*). Oh—can I do that? It's hard, oh, very—very—hard, but I'll try. And teacher says I must pray for Mother-in-law. I will do that now (*kneels by the bench*). Oh, Jesus, bless Mother-in-law, soften her heart and help her to know God and the Jesus way. And oh, Jesus, forgive my sins and bless Mother-in-law.

*Enter Mrs. Ling.*

MRS. LING: Come here, Daughter-in-law, come here. What are you doing on the floor? Why aren't you at your washing, lazy one? What are you doing kneeling there? Tell me at once.

*Golden Lily helps her across the stage to a chair on the right.*

GOLDEN LILY: Honorable Mother-in-law, I was praying.

MRS. LING: Praying! To what? Not to the divine Kuang Yen, for here you were at the wash tub, and the divine Kuang Yen is in the house on the shelf. You are lying to me.

GOLDEN LILY: No, honorable Mother-in-law, I tell you the truth. I was praying.

MRS. LING: Praying for what, huzzy? For a son, I hope.

GOLDEN LILY: No, Mother-in-law, I was praying to the Christian God, to the Great Spirit who cannot be seen, and to Jesus Christ, his son.

MRS. LING: (*Wrathfully*) What! do you mean to say that you have been praying to the foreign devil's God? Ah, I see you have disobeyed me. Did I not command you to forget all that you have learned at the foreign devil's school? Did I not command you never to think of that place again?

GOLDEN LILY: Yes, honorable Mother-in-law, but I cannot forget, for I found peace and happiness there. And, oh, Mother-in-law, I desire that you should be happy also, and peaceful; for you know, Mother-in-law, that the idols do not make you happy, and that you are living in daily fear of evil spirits. When you came in I was praying to Jesus that you would come to understand the Christian truth and learn to obey it.

MRS. LING: (*Rising in a fury*) Praying for me to be converted to the Christian teaching! How dare you, impudent one! I forbid you to go to the Jesus Doctrine temple again; do you hear me? You shall be punished for this. Our ancestors will be very angry at you. Go now and appease the divine Kuang Yen for the insult you have given her. Make a food offering to our ancestors and burn incense to the kitchen god.

GOLDEN LILY: No, honorable Mother-in-law, I am sorry to anger you, but I cannot worship the Kuang Yen any longer nor the ancestral tablets.

MRS. LING: (*With increasing anger*) What! Do you mean to disobey me, impudent one? We will see who rules in this house. Take that, huzzy (*slaps her on the cheek sharply*).

GOLDEN LILY: (*Putting her hands to her cheek, moaning as she recoils to the door*) Oh—oh—oh! (*Turning, she pauses, then advances slowly*) Mother-in-law—Mother-in-law! Strike — this cheek also (*turning the other cheek*).

MRS. LING (*Impulsively raises her hand to strike, then gasps and stares at Golden Lily in astonishment*) What? What do you mean?

GOLDEN LILY: That is part of the Jesus way, Mother-in-law.

MRS. LING: The Jesus way! What do you mean?

GOLDEN LILY: Teacher said that the Jesus way was to love the people that hate you, to be kind to those who ill-treat you, and—if any one strikes you on one cheek, you must turn the other also. So strike this cheek, Mother-in-law, strike this cheek!

MRS. LING: (*Looks at Golden Lily incredulously, then sinks into her chair, bewildered and subdued.*) She asks me to strike the other cheek! She is kind to me even though I ill-treat her! The Jesus way! Go! Go! Leave me! Leave me!

GOLDEN LILY: (*Retires to the door, looks back smiling*) Mother-in-law, I bless you, I love you. (*She goes out.*)

MRS. LING: She even loves me! (*Remains with head bowed on back of chair.*)

CURTAIN

## Scene V

Same as Scene I, except that the dressing-case has been removed from the table and a small paper-covered Chinese Testament is in its place.

*When the curtain rises Mrs. Ling is seen standing before the altar. She is disheveled in appearance and is without paint or powder. She has the look of one who has passed through a great emotional experience. Standing before the altar, she slowly blows out the candle on the right, and after a pause she blows out the candle on the left, muttering to herself.*

MRS. LING: Strange! Strange! In three short days what strange things have happened to me! (*She takes up the ancestral tablet and gazes long and searchingly on it, shaking her head slowly. Then in a hoarse whisper*) I dare not! (*She takes up several of the idol papers that are fastened to the altar. Some of them slip through her fingers to the floor. She looks at the others closely.*) I never doubted them before! (*The rest of the papers fall to the floor. Hesitatingly, she takes down the Kuang Yen and gazes earnestly upon it.*) Can it be, Kuang Yen, can it be that my belief has been shaken? Oh, will you be angry, will you punish me? (*She slowly places it on the table and sits down by it, not moving her eyes from it and looking very much troubled.*) Do not strike me dead, Kuang Yen. (*She sees the book on the table and picks it up in a half-frightened way. She turns the pages slowly, her brows contracted in deep and troubled thought. Then in a whisper, reading very slowly*) "The Jesus way, the Jesus way," she said. "Bless them that curse you—do—good—despitefully use you—persecute you—if—any one—strikes you—on one cheek—Ah!" (*She leans her elbow on the table and bows her head on her hand, murmuring.*) The Jesus way! The Jesus way! (*After a prolonged pause, Golden Lily enters timidly. She looks about, not seeing Mrs. Ling at first. Then discovering her, she starts and turns to leave the room. Mrs. Ling, hearing her, looks up, and, with something of her old domineering way.*) Golden Lily, don't go! Stay!

GOLDEN LILY: (*Frightened*) I—I was looking for something. (*Seeing the book in Mrs. Ling's hands*) Oh—Mother-in-law, you have it—my book!

MRS. LING: Yes, I found it where you had hidden it in your red bridal chest.

GOLDEN LILY: Oh, please let me have it—my precious book!

MRS. LING: (*In something of her old sharp tone*) But I want it. I am going to—

GOLDEN LILY: (*Interrupting her*) Oh—please don't burn it. They gave it to me at the school—my precious book!

MRS. LING: I want the book—to read—not to burn it.

GOLDEN LILY: (*Greatly astonished*) Mother-in-law! To—read it!

MRS. LING: Yes, Golden Lily, to read it. Strange things have happened to me while I have refused to see you or any one these last three days.

GOLDEN LILY: Oh, yes, Mother-in-law, the honorable Great Man and I have been greatly troubled about you.

MRS. LING: I wished to be alone.

GOLDEN LILY: Tell me about it, Mother-in-law.

MRS. LING: Golden Lily, the other day, when you turned the other cheek, my anger flew away suddenly, and I saw the truth. I have sinned heavily against you, but your love and patience have shown me that I have been a very wicked woman. Forgive me for my cruel treatment (*outstretching her hands*).

GOLDEN LILY: (*Grasping her hands*) It is the Jesus way to forgive, Mother-in-law.

MRS. LING: The Jesus way! The Jesus way! For three days those words have rung in my head, and I have been afraid, oh, greatly afraid.

GOLDEN LILY: Afraid! Of what, Mother-in-law?

MRS. LING: Of the Kuang Yen, of our ancestors. Oh, they will be angry with me, I know. They will punish me for thinking of the Jesus way.

GOLDEN LILY: No, no, Mother-in-law. They cannot harm you. I am only a poor, stupid girl, and I know the Jesus way just a very little, but I know that it takes away all these fears and gives us joy and peace.

MRS. LING: Oh, that is what I want—peace,—for I am tormented.

GOLDEN LILY: And the Kuang Yen cannot give you peace.

MRS. LING: No! No! Not peace.

GOLDEN LILY: Nor happiness.

MRS. LING: I am a very unhappy woman (*she buries her face in her hands*).

*Mr. Ling enters and Golden Lily goes eagerly to meet him.*

GOLDEN LILY: Honorable Great Man, come and tell Mother-in-law about the Jesus way.

MR. LING: (*Amased*) Can it be—?

GOLDEN LILY: Yes—yes, she wants to know.

*Mrs. Ling has looked up when Mr. Ling entered. It is her turn to be surprised.)*

MRS. LING: Honorable Great Man, you, too, have been learning the Jesus way.

MR. LING: Yes, and though I know but little, I am convinced that it is a great and good religion.

MRS. LING: It—must be. But Kuang Yen and our ancestors will surely send disaster to our family if we renounce the worship of them.

MR. LING: For more than a year I have been thinking of these things, and I am persuaded that the worship of our ancestors and of the idols is a great evil to us and to our country. These superstitions have filled us with fear and made us slaves.

MRS. LING: (*Slowly and thoughtfully*) Perhaps—you are right.

MR. LING: (*With growing earnestness*) New times have come to our country—great times, such as have never been seen before. Our people must be freed from these deadly superstitions and rise to new liberty and greatness. The Jesus teachings are great and noble. I am convinced that if we follow these, we shall be a great people.

MRS. LING: Almost you persuade me. But what will our son say if we embrace the new religion? He, of all others, is most zealous in observing the rites.

MR. LING: Our son? He, too, has been thinking of these things. Only a few days ago he wrote me that he is no longer satisfied with the old religion, and that he has already become a learner in one of the foreign temples in Pekin. He says that he is convinced that he and we need this new and vital religion.

MRS. LING: Can it be that he has accepted the new faith! (*Pausing, then resolutely*) It is enough; I hesitate no longer. (*She rises from her chair, and in a commanding tone*) Golden Lily, take the Kuang Yen away and the tablets and all the idols in the house and command that they be burned at once. (*Golden Lily takes the tablet and the idol and goes out.*) Honorable Great Man, take the idol papers and cast them to the flames also.

MR. LING: It is better so. (*He gathers up the idol papers from the floor and from the altar,—all but the soothsayer's charm on the door. Golden Lily enters and sees the charm still there.*)

GOLDEN LILY: One more piece, Honorable Great Man (*pointing to the charm on the door*).

MRS. LING: It is the charm the soothsayer gave me to protect the house from the influence of the evil eye. Let it remain.

GOLDEN LILY: We need not fear the evil eye if we follow the Jesus way.

MR. LING: The soothsayer, I believe, is an old humbug.

MRS. LING: Humbug? Surely not. For years he has been my infallible

guide. Remember how only a short time ago he was able to tell us by means of his magic mirror that Golden Lily had run away to the foreign school.

GOLDEN LILY: Oh, Mother-in-law, he deceived you. He saw me in the Inn where I rested, and he heard me ask the way of one of the travelers.

MR. LING: Ha! I see! and then, when you sent for him, he pretended that he saw Golden Lily going there in his magic mirror.

MRS. LING: (*Indignantly*) Imposter! Bring me the charm. (*Golden Lily brings it and Mrs. Ling tears it in pieces and throws it on the floor.*) No longer shall my gold fill his knavish pockets.

MR. LING: Good! very good!

*The children rush in, Precious Gold first, followed by Beautiful Pearl, and then by Old Rag. They are very much excited. Their voices are shrill, their eyes almost pop out of their heads.*

PRECIOUS GOLD: (*Breathlessly*) Grandmother! Grandmother! They are burning the idols, and the smoke is going way up high! oo—oo—way up high! (*Gestures with her arms with an upward movement.*)

BEAUTIFUL PEARL: (*Imitating her*) Oo—oo—way up high!

OLD RAG: Oo—oo—up high!

MRS. LING: Come here, children. Old Rag, sit on my knee. Let me tell you. We are not going to have any more idols in this house.

PRECIOUS GOLD: That's good. They made me afraid. I am glad.

BEAUTIFUL PEARL: I am glad, too.

OLD RAG: I glad!

MR. LING: And we are going to learn the Jesus way.

PRECIOUS GOLD: Oh, I know about that—Mother told me. And may we go to the foreign school? The children have such good times there.

MRS. LING: Yes, yes. I make no more objections.

MR. LING: Old Rag need not wear the charm any longer. We are not afraid of evil spirits taking him away. (*He takes the charm from off the boy's neck.*)

GOLDEN LILY: And I think we ought to give him a new name. Old Rag is so ugly.

MR. LING: Good idea. What shall it be?

MRS. LING: Everlasting Virtue. How is that for a name? Would you like it (*speaking to Old Rag*)?

OLD RAG: Good!

*Knocking is heard off stage. They all listen intently.*

MRS. LING: Some one is coming. Golden Lily, go—see who it is.

GOLDEN LILY: (*Goes to the door, peers out, exclaims joyfully*) Oh! it's teacher! It's teacher! (*She beckons with her hand*) Come in, teacher, this way.

*Miss Woodby enters. Golden Lily whispers excitedly to her at the door. Miss Woodby starts and glances hastily at Mrs. Ling, then at the empty altar.*

MISS WOODBY: Why!—(*She starts forward with outstretched hands toward Mrs. Ling who has risen to meet her*) I am so glad—so very glad and thankful.

MRS. LING: And I, honorable teacher—I, too, am glad. I do not understand how it all came.

MISS WOODBY: (*Wonderingly*) It was the still small voice of the spirit speaking in your heart, honorable madam.

MRS. LING: (*Placing her hand on Golden Lily's shoulder*) And it spoke through Golden Lily.

MISS WOODBY: (*Placing her hand on Golden Lily's other shoulder*) Thank God for Golden Lily and all others like her in China!

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